(b) Reasons for the shortage of manpower are as follows:

(1) Overall global shortage of maritime personnel.

(2) Higher salary offered to Indian maritime personnel in foreign vessels.

(c) A proposal for hiring foreign crew to meet the shortage of officers is under consideration.

(d) The Government has initiated following measures to increase availability of manpower:

(i) Expanding the facilities for marine education and training by allowing private colleges to be opened.

(ii) Ensuring quality training at the maritime institutes as per international standards and introducing several new courses for pre and post sea training.

(iii) Action has been initiated for induction of retired navel officers into the merchant navy.

(iv) Introduction of tonnage tax obligation on shipping companies to give on board training to cadets.

(v) Permitting two years age relaxation and fee concession to encourage girl candidates to join maritime sector.

(vi) The training and examination systems have been reviewed to minimize the avoidable delays for obtaining certificate of competency.

VRS for MMD personnel

1891. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a VRS for Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) personnel;

(b) if so, details of this proposal;

(c) whether it is a fact that MMD offices in places outside Mumbai are slow to change and are stuck to the old in-efficient system;

(d) the steps proposed to offer attractive and good VRS terms to Surveyors of the old system and with a proven track record of delays and harassment of small scale units in maritime economy;

(e) whether warnings have been issued to such elements; and

(f) the manner in which Government is helping the small entrepreneurs?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (f) The personnel of Mercantile Marine Departments (MMDs) being Central Government employees are covered under the Central Government rules regarding voluntary retirement and no separate Voluntary Retirement Scheme is required for them. Inspite of shortage of surveyors, MMDs have been making best efforts for efficient functioning.

It is not correct to say that MMD offices outside Mumbai follow old and inefficient system. The policy formulated by the Government is followed uniformly by all MMDs.

Their performance is regularly monitored through periodical performance report. As and when complaints are received, they are examined as per procedure and appropriate action is initiated as warranted.

The Government has framed rules for conduct of various surveys that are required for certification of ships. The MMD Surveyors follow certification procedure uniformly irrespective of the size of the company. The fees charged for smaller vessel or for smaller inspections are generally less than those for bigger ships and inspections so as to ensure that there is no undue financial burden on small entrepreneurs.

Opposition of Road Safety Forum to Formula One Car Racing

1892. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received a representation from the Road Safety Forum against encouraging super-speed racing formula one car racing and other such events in India;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Road Safety Forum cautioned that such events will have a "Demonstration Effect" on millions of youth in India;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Road Safety Forum had elaborated that the number of road accident would increase due to glamorization of accidents on the roads; and

(d) the reasons for the lack of interest by Government in preventing increase of deaths on our roads?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Road Safety Forum in their representation *inter alia* stated that Formula 1 racing with increase high-speed driving in India, aggravating road accidents. They have cautioned that high-speed driving will have disastrous consequence on all the drivers in this country and, therefore, the country cannot afford such frivolities. Hence the Government should ban advertisements which encourage products relating to high-speed driving.

(d) The safety of road users is primarily the responsibility of the concerned State Government. However this department has taken several steps to improve road safety for the road users which are as under:

(i) Road safety is the integral part of road design at the planning stage for National Highways/Expressways.

(ii) Various steps to enhance road safety such as road furniture, road markings/road signs, introduction Highway Traffic Management System using Intelligent Transport System, enhancement of discipline among contractors during construction, road safety audit on selected stretches, have been undertaken National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

(iii) Refresher training to Heavy Motor Vehicle drivers in the unorganized sector.

(iv) Involvement of NGOs for road safety activities by Department of Road Transport and Highways and NHAI.

(v) Setting up of Model Driving Training School in the country by Department of Road Transport and Highways.